Eberron Under the Glass

Healing

By Sean K Reynolds

Welcome to "Eberron Under the Glass," a column that takes a look at how to handle staple themes of **D&D** adventure in an **Eberron** campaign. Whether the characters must search for a lost artifact, unearth lore in an old tome, or deal with a goblin uprising, **Eberron** campaigns do things a little differently. This series helps **Eberron** players and DMs get the right feel in the setting.

This article looks at the concept of healing in Eberron.

Few Spellcasters, Many Experts

In a typical **D&D** campaign, magical healing is readily available, even if it requires heading back to a town or city to get a spell the party cleric or druid is too inexperienced to cast. In Eberron, minor magic is more common while mid- to high-level magic is relatively rare because few characters have PC classes, and NPC classes are slower to achieve anything but the weakest spells. This means that anything other than the most basic healing is out of the reach of most NPCs, and PCs can have difficulties finding available spellcasters to help them out with healing magic (whether it's just a simple *remove disease*, or something more serious like *raise dead* or *heal*).

Even given the slight increase in the number of adepts compared to a typical **D&D** campaign (1% instead of 0.5%), an adept's slower spell progression means that few of them ever achieve 2nd-level spellcasting. Furthermore, most of the spells an adventurer needs from an NPC spellcaster aren't on the adept list (*lesser restoration* is noticeably absent, for example) or require a very high-level adept because of the slow spellcasting progression in that class. This means that except for simple healing like *cure light wounds*, PCs can't depend on NPC spellcasting to help them recover from adventuring afflictions. (It also means that people in Eberron may consider low-level arcane magic somewhat routine, while divine healing is still somewhat surprising.)

Fortunately, magic isn't the only solution. The Heal skill can treat immediate injury, give long-term care, deal with poison, and thwart disease. Though these take far longer than what the typical adventurer demands, they're more than sufficient to take care of the normal people of the world. After all, the regular folk of Eberron don't deal with situations where they need to recover 50 hit points in a hurry (most people have less than 20 hit points), and while the fantasy equivalents of dysentery and cholera are certainly dangerous, they're relatively safe and slow-acting compared to DC 16 mummy rot. Since the common people rarely can afford magical healing methods (a *remove disease* spell costs 150 gp, which is the equivalent of about five years' wages for an unskilled laborer), nonmagical methods are their only hope.

Because of these factors, most temple healers are experts rather than spellcasters, and even a 1st-level expert dedicated to healing -- 4 ranks in Heal, +2 from Self-Sufficient or +3 from Skill Focus (Heal) for a total bonus of +6 or +7 without counting ability score bonuses -- can be the difference between life or death for someone injured, poisoned, or diseased, so normal people don't dismiss the help of nonmagical healing just because it's not magic. Of course, a 1st-level PC cleric probably has a Heal skill modifier as good or better than that, so yet again NPC healers aren't much help to a typical adventurer.

Serve the Faithful First

As mentioned above, skilled spellcasters in Eberron are uncommon, and a temple with a spellcaster capable of

performing serious healing magic isn't likely to hire that person out to anyone with enough gold. While in a typical **D&D** campaign you can trust the church of Pelor or Ilmater to provide healing (for a fee or donation) to anyone in need, in Eberron even benign churches such as the Silver Flame or the Sovereign Host aren't willing to expend their precious divine spells on nonbelievers (as Keith Baker mentioned in his Dragonshards article on religion in Eberron). Not even dirty unwashed adventurers are exempt from this; if a person can't prove that she is a believer, she is not going to get any valuable magic cast on her behalf.

Temples fortunate enough to have spellcasting priests (whether advanced adepts or crusading clerics), normally expect payment from adventurers in services rather than money (while any merchant or noble can cough up gold or simple favors, adventurers are exceptional people capable of exceptional deeds, and the churches want to take advantage of these extraordinary talents). This gives an **Eberron** DM an easy hook for adventures, particularly if one or more of the PCs has strong ties to a particular religion -- whether that adventurer is a cleric, druid, paladin (or even a devout member of another class).

As Keith Baker pointed out in his article, corrupt clerics are the exception to the "no paying for spellcasting" rule; such individuals are far more likely to use their god-given powers to acquire riches as long as they believe in the long run it benefits the church in some way. Such behavior may warrant expelling the corrupt cleric from the temple, and these characters make interesting cohorts or hirelings for PCs -- a ready source of healing magic, though sure to cause controversy when the PCs need to meet with uncorrupted members of that faith. Corrupt clerics-in-exile might even set up camps near known adventuring sites (such as on a road to the Mournland, a safe distance outside the mist) where they can charge high prices for their desperately needed services.

Of course, PCs can turn the general lack of spellcasting to their advantage by trading their rare gifts for other benefits. For example, after saving a town from hobgoblin raiders, the PC cleric leader can talk the locals into renovating the local temple of her faith, then promise to return once a year to use magic to heal the townsfolk. This benefits the local expert-priest (who has a better living space and a stronger focus point for religious services in town), the church (which gets an improved temple and local goodwill), and the PC (who gains fame for her generosity and pledge of support). Over time the town might grow from this attention, and when the PC decides to retire she may find a temple or even a secular position waiting for her there.

House Jorasco

One bit of chaos in the above assumptions is House Jorasco. Unlike temples, they do provide healing services (mundane and magical) for anyone and they do it for money. Since even a 1st-level character can possess a least dragonmark, House Jorasco has a large number of magical healers at their disposal despite having no access to the gods. Jorasco's talented healers and mercantile mindset make them the points of contact for anyone needing healing, particularly those who cannot or will not associate with the local temples. It is important to note that while the "typical" healer of House Jorasco described in the *Eberron Campaign Setting* is a 3rd-level adept, Keith Baker offers an alternate healer (the Jorasco Apothecary) in his Dragonshards article about magewrights; the apothecary also makes potions, and in Eberron the members of House Jorasco are the best source of healing potions.

As noted in the *Eberron Campaign Setting*, the code of the House requires they heal any who need it as long as they can pay, which means they sometimes deal with unsavory characters. This means that the House may need the help of adventurers from time to time to sort out hostilities between groups they help (such as two prominent noble houses intent on making sure only their family survives an ongoing violent feud) or to fend off unwanted political pressure when it is undiplomatic to call upon the guild headquarters for intervention.

Character Classes and Levels

By Sean K Reynolds

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This article looks at the concept of character classes and levels in Eberron.

PC Classes Are Rare

In a standard campaign, characters with PC classes are uncommon but frequent enough to not be extraordinary. For example, on page 139 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, a typical 200-person hamlet has 13 characters with PC classes, including 3 clerics and 3 fighters. While that number seems small (it's less than 10% of the hamlet's population), it means that a party of four PCs in a hamlet are outnumbered by the number of PC-class NPCs.

By comparison, most of the people of Eberron never have the potential to take levels in PC classes. Adepts and experts run the temples, while the rare cleric is a true knight of the church. A typical veteran of the Last War is a 2nd-level warrior, while fighters are specialists and officers. Common cutpurses are merely experts, and guildmasters and master thieves are rogues. Spellcasters who create common magic items are magewrights, and only the true wizards wield the mightiest spells and forge the items of legend.

People with character classes are larger than life, even early in their career. PC-class characters are the Amelia Earharts, Wyatt Earps, and Thomas Edisons of their day -- famous and capable of things no normal man or woman could accomplish. Ask anyone who knew one of these people in their younger years and they'll tell you they were destined for something great. Of course, most people believed they were crazy, too, so being a person who is "special" in this way is a mixed blessing. Nonetheless, PC-class characters are the rare exception to the unwashed masses. In Eberron, a true cleric or wizard is someone to respect or even fear, and a paladin isn't someone you take for granted.

The same standards apply to evil characters; even at an early age, they stand out. Townsfolk remember the young man who tortured and dissected animals, and when it turns out years later that he joined the Cults of the Dragon Below, they nod as if they expected it. Fellow students of the woman now known as Demise (see the *Eberron Campaign Setting,* page 252) remember her as strange and obsessed, and they always suspected she was up to no good. In modern terms, the average person who does evil is the one with neighbors who say, "He was a quiet fellow -- never caused any trouble," whereas neighbors remember the exceptional person as, "He always seemed strange, gave me the creeps, didn't like having him around."

During play, players should see that normal people recognize them as unusual, just as they should sense when an NPC is similarly unusual. This is not to say that every memorable villain NPC has to have a PC class or that characters with NPC classes can't make interesting villains. It means that a sense of parity exists between heroic PCs and villainous PCs. When Indiana Jones vied with Belloq in *Raiders of a Lost Ark*, it was a contest of equals. Heroic PCs should face off against their equals from time to time, too -- even in Eberron where PC-class characters are rare.

High-Level Characters Are Rare

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* assumes that in a typical campaign, a significant number of NPCs of all non-epic levels exist in the world. Your typical small city has at least one 7th-level NPC of each of the *Player's Handbook* classes, or at least 10th-level in a large city and at least 13th-level in a metropolis (with additional characters at half that level, more at one-fourth that level, and so on).

In Eberron, the numbers are much lower. Just as their PC classes set PCs apart from normal people, their heroic adventures lead to increased class levels unavailable to common folk. As author Keith Baker points out in one of his Dragonshard articles, it's perfectly acceptable for a 20-year veteran soldier to still be 2nd level because most NPCs do not gain experience in the way that PCs do. That same article has variant tables that show how Eberron settlements have fewer high-level characters than a standard campaign. This means that in a few short months of adventuring, a young PC can outstrip the abilities of everyone in his home town and even those of experienced NPC characters in large cities. In Eberron, a "high level" character may be less than 10th level (for example, the Lord of Blades is 12th level, and he's feared for his own power in addition to the

army of warforged he leads).

What does this mean in terms of gameplay? It means that established adventurers are forces to be reckoned with. A typical large city might have only five fighters at 4th level or higher, so the arrival of a party of four 6th-level heroes will draw some attention. Commoners and younger warriors wonder aloud if the visitors could beat the local champions in a fight. Magewrights gossip about a visiting wizard and whether or not she plans to dump any of her unwanted magic items on "their" market. Corrupt adepts and greedy expert-priests worry that the new cleric of the faith in town will upset business in their temple. Pickpockets and thugs wonder if the famous trapfinder is looking to take over the local thieves' guild. Though 6th-level characters are B-list celebrities, they're still celebrities. Any 10th-level characters are the stars, and NPCs will treat them as such.

One way to think of this celebrity is in terms of television shows or weekly movie serials. For the first few episodes of a show or serial, the viewers don't have any strong attachment to the characters because they haven't learned much about them. After the sixth or seventh episode, the viewers have learned to like or dislike the characters and know what sort of behavior to expect. After a full season, the viewers either love or hate the characters. Each significant adventure by the PCs is like an episode. At first they're unknown and untested. After several adventures, word gets out and the PCs are known well enough to have a following -- even to the point of making some casual enemies. After a year of adventuring, the PCs have a well-known reputation among regular people and several mortal enemies who'd like to see them dead. People in need approach heroic PCs for help and avoid those known to cause trouble, while villains avoid the heroes and try to recruit the troublemakers. PCs don't need to hang out in taverns to find work; people approach them on the street and local officials track them down at home.

Their abilities and power level make PCs a cut above most people in the world. With Eberron's advanced travel and communication methods, information travels quickly and a PC's notoriety spreads beyond the immediate area of their deeds. In Eberron, PCs are heroes, and they have a hard time trying to keep a low profile. Fortunately, when the PCs are famous, it just makes it easier for the DM to introduce excitement, danger, and cliffhanger action!

Planes and Adventuring

By Sean K Reynolds

Welcome to "Eberron Under the Glass," a column that takes a look at how to handle staple themes of **D&D** adventure in an **Eberron** campaign. Whether the characters must search for a lost artifact, unearth lore in an old tome, or deal with a goblin uprising, **Eberron** campaigns do things a little differently. This series helps **Eberron** players and DMs get the right feel in the setting.

This article looks at the concept of planes and adventuring in Eberron.

Planar Awareness Is High

In most **D&D** campaigns, the planes are very mysterious and legendary. The common folk know little about other planes, except perhaps "demons are from the Abyss" or "devils are from Hell" (though they may confuse the two). If asked which is the plane of chaos or the home plane of ghosts, most common folk won't care because they're both horrible places no person in his right mind would want to go and aren't relevant to getting this year's crops in.

By contrast, Eberron's cosmology has a direct effect on the world through their metaphysical distances and manifest zones, and the common people are aware of this connectivity. For example, the residents of Sharn know their city's towers remain aloft only because of the Syranian manifest zone, ghost appearances are more common when Dolurrh is coterminous, and animals have smaller litters when Lamannia is remote.

Even in Eberron, this planar awareness doesn't mean regular people know what those planes are like or what sort of creatures live there. Ask a magewright from Breland what creatures call Fernia home and he's not going

to rattle off the monster types listed in the ***Eberron*** *Campaign Setting*; "fire monsters" is about all he can tell you. Even a talented general from Karrnath probably can't name any of the fortresses or leaders of Shavarath. The names and natures of the planes are known, but only scholars tend to have information worthwhile to an adventurer.

Planar Travel Is Rare

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* suggests that planewalking is a fairly common practice for high-level characters. In the **Eberron** setting, characters with PC classes are uncommon (adepts and magewrights don't have any planar-travel spells), and high-level characters rare, so few have access to spells such as *plane shift,* and planar travel is very rare.

While it is rare, it does happen, and planar adventurers are wise to study where they're going before they make such a journey. For example, Daanvi is the plane of law, but who -- and what -- is in charge? How do they treat neutral or chaotic visitors? Thelanis is the Faerie Court, but what's the political and geographic setup? Are there any heroes of a past age sleeping there, waiting to be retrieved in a time of need?

Because Eberron's planes are associated only with Eberron (rather than a common set of Outer Planes with multiple Material Planes), the planes should tie in to events in Eberron, whether current or historical. The **D&D** cosmology has Ysgard, the home of the Norse pantheon, whether or not the campaign's Material Plane has a Norse-worshiping culture. By comparison, the Eberron cosmology doesn't have any planes representing concepts not on Eberron, and the creatures on those planes. If adventurers from Eberron have to go to one of the planes, it should be for some reason important to Eberron or even epic in proportion. It should not be on a whim. Eberron heroes don't go to Irian for a friendly chat with light archons -- they go to negotiate for a legion to help drive back a force of wraiths advancing on Sharn. They don't go to Shavarath for the fun of beating up fiends. Instead they go to unearth a lost artifact buried under a devil-controlled tower built by angels long ago. Plane-hopping isn't a lark in Eberron -- it is serious business.

Planar Threats Are Familiar

While travel from Eberron to another plane is rare, travel in the other direction is unfortunately much more frequent. Evil creatures find ways to cross when their planes are coterminous, good creatures do the same for theirs, and rogue creatures from all the other planes do so for their own purposes. Ghosts creep into Eberron when Dolurrh approaches. Though the quori and daelkyr invasions happened thousands of years ago, everyone has heard about them. Mortal organizations in Eberron endure through generations both to protect the world against these incursions and to shatter the wards that keep the outsiders away. In a standard campaign, a sudden influx of extraplanar creatures is a surprising and horrendous thing, resulting in chaos and panic. In Eberron, all of those things occur . . . but people are waiting for them with their swords and spells ready.

Cursed Magic Items

By Sean K Reynolds

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This article looks at cursed items in the **Eberron** setting.

Why and How Is It Cursed?

A standard campaign assumes that cursed items come from one of three sources: flaws in the crafting process

that went unnoticed and that generated an undesirable result, entropy and chaos corrupting an existing magic item, or deliberate creation by evil or insane spellcasters. From those three origins we have many different kinds of cursed items. For instance, you can find ones that fool the user into thinking it is working, to those that work only occasionally, to those that have a radically different function. In **Eberron** campaigns we can add specific details to all three types of origins (and a fourth not mentioned in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Curse Origins in Eberron

Flaws in the Process: One of the things that makes the **Eberron** setting different is that creating magic items is an industry involving many crafters rather than an isolated process by a handful of independent spellcasters. More people are making magic items in Eberron than in a standard campaign, and that means more chances to make a mistake.

An interesting adventure hook can involve tracking a source of cursed items to a particular artisan, finding that he ran out of a key component and used an inferior one with unknown side effects, and is now producing far more cursed items than another artificer of similar skill. Even worse, he taught his apprentices to use this substitution component and now they produce more cursed items as well. Adventurers in Eberron should know that things are rarely as they seem, and a "grand plot to spread cursed items about Khorvaire" may actually be a simple mistake by a busy craftsman. Then again, maybe the replacement ingredient was suggested and provided by a sinister mysterious person with an agenda. . . .

Fortunately, most of the items produced in large numbers are minor items with little or no ability to cause serious harm to the user -- you might see a *potion of cure light wounds* that makes the drinker sick for a day or a *scroll of blur* that actually makes the caster glow brightly. Such cursed items are an inconvenience rather than a serious threat (as compared to some of the deadly cursed items in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Entropy and Chaos: Eberron is unusual in that it has five major places that can have a strong influence on existing magic, with two of them being physical and another three being planar: Khyber, the Mournland, Kythri, Thelanis, and Xoriat. Magic items created in these areas or items that have been in these areas for long enough (or even under the right circumstances in coterminous areas) may change due to this, and they can acquire cursed traits as a result. Khyber often taints the function of items with evil requirements or may stop working in good-aligned areas. The Mournland corrupts healing items so the user thinks the items are working when they're not, and the items may have random effects or magical backlashes each time they're used. Kythri makes cursed items that function intermittently or have a different or opposite effect than the one intended. Thelanis makes cursed items that delude the user, have drawbacks, or have shorter or longer effects than normal. Xoriat makes items that function intermittently, have different or opposite effects, or acquire strange or unpleasant drawbacks and requirements.

Deliberate Creation: In a standard campaign, magic is rare enough that creating a cursed item is not worth it; if you want to hurt an enemy, you can assassinate them more cheaply, and if you want to spread chaos, you can choose to make an item that works only for you and your allies rather than one that hurts everyone who uses it. Therefore in a standard campaign, those who intentionally create cursed items are probably very evil or insane. In Eberron, the increased availability of magic makes the likelihood of curse-sabotage much more likely, even among normal schemers.

Example: Two nobles are feuding. The first pays an artificer to make a cursed sword (the 8,315 gp cost for a *+2 longsword* isn't that significant to a member of a noble family, and in Eberron most small cities have the means of creating minor magic weapons so the noble has access to this strategy). He arranges for a third party to give it to the second noble as a gift, and then the first noble challenges his rival to a duel. The first noble wins and to everyone it appears that there was no foul play. The cursed sword outlives both nobles, but still becomes as heavy as lead when facing a member of the first noble's family.

Eberron also has two significant forces intent on spreading chaos through the world. The first group is the Lords of Dust, who are powerful and evil beings who often act just to cause chaos for its own sake. These beings have the time and resources to create cursed items, and they find it entertaining to watch mortals fall prey to horrible curses as the items are passed from person to person. The traditional "monkey's paw" of twisted wishes is the exact sort of item they love to make.

The second force is the cult of the Traveler. He is said to wander the world spreading chaos (though, like all of

Eberron's gods, he is not actually present in the world), and his mysterious followers often take this mantle upon themselves, making cursed items and passing them off as normal. As the saying goes, "Beware the gifts of the Traveler." A doppelganger or changeling artificer can make a living creating secretly cursed items for a year, then move to another city with another identity when those curses start to manifest.

Character Actions: Some cursed items arise because of the way they are used. A suit of armor sprayed with gore from a wounded daelkyr may develop a thirst for the blood of its wearer. A *holy avenger* used to kill a just priest is forever tainted and functions only on holy ground or during a conjunction with Syrania. A *staff of power* used to kill a powerful lich is altered by a backlash of magical energy and slowly drains away its user's life force every time it is activated. In Eberron, things don't always end well, and achieving victory at the cost of damage to a favorite item reflects that theme.

Cursed items don't have to be random. They can be the root of an adventure or the foil to its solution. They may be valuable items with an annoying or unexpected drawback. They may have considerable historical impact. They may be the recurring villain in an ongoing campaign. In other words, most cursed items have a story; the question is how can that story influence your **Eberron** campaign?

Race Relations and Prejudice

By Sean K Reynolds

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Take a look at prejudice and other race-related issues in Eberron.

Not So Cut-And-Dry

In a standard campaign, racial interaction among the *Player's Handbook* races is pretty simple. Humans get along with everyone, dwarves think elves are flighty, nobody trusts half-orcs, and so on. Despite these feelings, the typical **D&D** campaign has a fairly cosmopolitan feel, with all races living in peace in larger cities with no serious racial conflicts. In the **Eberron** setting, things are much more complicated, mainly in that there are different groups of each race, and people may have bad feelings toward one and not the other; racism's roots in Eberron, as in the real world, tend to be based on culture rather than actual race. (As the *Eberron Campaign Setting* says on page 24, "A character from an **Eberron** campaign is never just a human or a dwarf: He is a human from Thrane or a dwarf from the Mror Holds.")

For example, the elves of House Phiarlan are an old dragonmarked house with a centuries-long history of entertainment and artistry; most common folk praise them and their work. In contrast to that house, the elves of the new nation of Valenar are seen as land thieves and a threat to the peace established by the Treaty of Thronehold. Will the acts of the Valenar elves paint those of House Phiarlan with the same stigma? Will the people of Khorvaire grow to dislike elves as a whole but tolerate House Phiarlan because "they're the good ones"?

Humans, as rulers of much of Khorvaire for nearly a thousand years, have a reputation for nation building. Sharn is arguably the greatest city on the continent, and its residents see themselves as the most civilized people on the continent. By contrast, the humans of the Shadow Marches are illiterate unwashed swamp-dwellers who consort with orcs. Even though a human from Sharn may look exactly like a human from the Shadow Marches, the Brelander is comfortable looking down on the Marcher as something less human. Likewise, the refugees from Cyre, regardless of race, are looked down upon as the biggest losers in the war that hurt everyone, and some folk think disaster struck the Cyrans because they somehow deserved it, and so they heap additional abuse on them for their assumed crimes. Culture, not physical race, is seen as justifiable

cause for prejudice.

Half-orcs, often the scapegoat for anything unpleasant, most commonly hail from Droaam, the Eldeen Reaches, or the Shadow Marches, and some form part of House Tharashk. People see Droaam half-orcs as dangerous monsters and Shadow Marches half-orcs as primitives; citizens of Aundair see Reaches half-orcs (and anyone else from there) as separatists and nation-betrayers while those outside Aundair don't think about them at all. In contrast to all of this, most consider House Thrarashk's half-orcs and humans to be very talented scouts with a critical skill for finding valuable resources. Again, culture and nationality is more important than actual race.

Old Races and New Races

Many typical **D&D** campaigns use the standard races and may include one unusual race, such as lizard-folk, aasimar, and so on. By contrast, the **Eberron** campaign has four new races in common play (changeling, kalashtar, shifter, and warforged). Each of these "new" races is something unusual and their role in the campaign can make many "normal" people nervous, and that can lead to racism in the strictest sense. Any member of these races is likely to run into intolerance on a regular basis, whether in urban or rural environments, from any of the older races.

Changelings are descended from humans and doppelgangers, and their natural ability to hide their true appearance means that few people ever fully trust them -- how can you confide in someone who might take on your face and use your secrets against you? Anyone who sees one in its natural form understands that it isn't really human and therefore its motives are suspect. The changeling tendency to consort with criminals only reinforces this prejudice, and in turn it means that the only place a changeling can find some acceptance is in the very criminal organizations that turn law-abiding people against them.

Kalashtar may appear physically attractive in a human sense, but their alien mind sets them apart, and while your typical adventurer is more accepting of strangeness, an average farmer or city-dweller doesn't take well to a "pretty-looking, funny-talking" kalashtar any more than someone in the modern world takes to a slick politician or book-minded ecologist telling them what's right and wrong. The kalashtar's tendency toward sincere goodness ameliorates some of their suspicion, but many people are always reminded of their ties to the Region of Dreams and the horrible quori that rule that place -- a fact that makes ignorant people fear them.

In some ways, shifters have the worst situation of all the new races. They can't pass as fully human like the changelings, they aren't beautiful and inherently good like the kalashtar, and they weren't built to be loyal soldiers like the warforged. Shifters are descended from lycanthropes, which many people consider to be monsters (and the shifters only a step above that). Crude, feral, and obviously not human, the shifters are feared by many common folk, and most shifters find themselves shunned for their appearance and mannerisms, particularly in places where the Church of the Silver Flame's crusade against lycanthropes was taken to heart.

To most people, warforged are an unfortunate reminder of the Last War. Built for combat and not for peace, the warforged race's clumsy attempts to blend in with normal society do not endear anyone to them. It doesn't help that the most famous member of their race, the Lord of Blades, has declared that the warforged shall rule Eberron, which renders all warforged as possible collaborators in this construct plot. Unlike veterans of other races, warforged can't blend in; the Last War resides in every fiber of their being. In some lands people treat them as property, and in most other places many still see them more as living weapons than as true people. Your average person is glad that no more warforged are being built (since the secret forging isn't publicly known) so that eventually this "race" will die out.

One thing to remember, though, is that the people of Eberron have a strong national identity because of decades of war, and that colors their racial perceptions; a Brelander may think that shifters are savage and changelings are untrustworthy, but a shifter or changeling from Breland is still better than anyone from Valenar or old Cyre. In many cases, nationalist bigotry is more common and accepted than racial bigotry.

Goblin Uprising

By Sean K Reynolds

Whether it's a search for a lost artifact, unearthing lore in an old tome, or dealing with a goblin uprising, **Eberron** campaigns do things a little differently. This series helps Eberron players and DMs get the right feel in the setting.

This article looks at how a surge in goblinoid attacks works differently in an **Eberron** campaign.

A Glorious Past

In a typical campaign, goblinoids are primitive creatures that scratch out a living on the fringes of civilized lands and, from time to time, muster enough warriors to raid frontier farms. Their equipment is generally inferior to that which humans and other allied races carry (though the more martial hobgoblins tend to have better gear), and they have little impact on civilized history other than their infrequent attacks.

In Eberron, by contrast, goblinoids once ruled much of western Khorvaire as the mighty Dhakaan Empire. Though the empire eventually fell, its past existence means two significant things for Eberron's goblinoid tribes, particularly the Dhakaani tribes who clung to the remnants of civilization rather than falling into savagery like their lowland Ghaal'dar kin.

Unlike goblinoids in most campaigns, the Dhakaani goblinoids grow up hearing their *duur'kala* ("dirge singers," their name for bards) tell tales of their peoples' ancient empire, an empire that was strong before the humans, elves, and dwarves gained power in Khorvaire. These inspirational stories are fuel that the Dhakaani leaders use to stoke the fires of vengeance among their tribes. While goblinoids in other worlds raid for food and loot, Dhakaani goblinoids march to war with some variant of "For the lost empire!" as their battle cry. Zealotry is a stronger motivator than hunger or greed and can make a common soldier face certain death without blinking.

Like all fallen civilizations, the Dhakaani Empire had its share of marvels and advances. Though some of them may seem primitive by modern Eberron standards, ancient items drawing on Eberron or Khyber dragonshards may lie buried in old goblin cities, waiting to be unearthed by a crafty warlord. Because of the war against the daelkyr, the lost goblin empire probably has many weapons made to defeat aberrations (such as the dolgaunt and dolgrim, tools of the daelkyr) and defenses that guard troops against mental attacks.

A Permanent Underclass

Eberron is also unusual because of its population of lower-class goblin slaves in most major cities. Unlike a typical campaign in which goblinoids are creatures that live "far away," an Eberron campaign has goblins literally underfoot. Though the citizens of those cities may ignore or forget about the goblins who tend their gardens, raise their animals, build their homes, and mine their stone, the goblins certainly bear their share of resentment toward their privileged employers. In the hands of a charismatic leader, these worker-goblins can turn into a murderous force; gardening tools, carpenter's hammers, and mining picks are just as deadly as weapons crafted for war when turned against unsuspecting foes, and a goblin rebellion in the heart of a city is more dangerous than an invading horde because the enemy is already within the city without having to fight its way in.

Desperate goblin slaves sometimes turn to guerrilla methods of striking back. If goblins soil the gardens so none but a goblin would eat from them, for example, the city starves while the goblins grow fat. If goblin miners and carpenters won't work, buildings remain unfinished and ships go unrepaired, affecting trade and defense. A goblin uprising doesn't have to be bloody to be an inconvenience or threat. These "passive" forms of resistance are particularly vexing to leaders because they can't be solved by killing a horde of monsters, yet

the perplexing questions about the identity and motivations of those behind the uprising remain.

A New Nation

The greatest difference between the goblinoids of a typical **D&D** campaign and those in an **Eberron** campaign is that the Eberron goblinoids have a homeland recognized by its neighboring countries as a sovereign nation. Adventurers from Breland can't just head into Darguun and kill any goblinoids they find; doing so is an act of terrorism (or an act of war, depending on the size of the invading group). A band of armored hobgoblins heading north from Rhukaan Draal may be a mercenary group responding to a contract rather than a gang intent on mayhem. If that band later attacks a caravan, is it a lapse in judgment, an order from a criminal employer, or a deliberate attempt by Lhesh Haruuc to start a war? As with the city-goblin rebellion scenario, killing those responsible isn't the end of the problem. Finding the truth requires investigation which may reveal an even larger problem. Of course, there are independent warlords in Darguun, and if some of Haruuc's troops go raiding (with or without his permission), he can brand them as traitors and promise the other signatories of the Treaty of Thronehold that he'll step up his efforts to eliminate these rogues. Such protestations are always best viewed with a measure of skepticism, since they may be no more than political cover for activity that is officially condemned but covertly approved or even encouraged.

Dungeon Exploration

By Sean K Reynolds

Welcome back to "Eberron Under the Glass," a column that looks at how staple themes of **D&D** adventure can be handled in an **Eberron** campaign. Whether it's a search for a lost artifact, unearthing lore in an old tome, or dealing with a goblin uprising, **Eberron** campaigns do things a little differently. *Eberron Under the Glass* helps Eberron players and DMs get the right feel in the setting.

This article examines the role of dungeon exploration in an **Eberron** campaign.

Campaign Themes and Dungeons

In a 'typical' campaign, the dungeon is the location for much of the campaign's adventuring. Some campaigns ignore everything outside the dungeon and start each adventure with, "So you're at the entrance to the dungeon...." A dungeon can be an old mine, lost dwarf-hold, or tomb of ancient evil creatures, and everything living in it (with the exception of a few caged prisoners) is something you're expected to kill as part of the adventure. Random encounters keep the danger level high, the PCs are the only explorers in the dungeon, and they can return home victorious when they empty all the rooms.

Not so in Eberron.

Search Slow, Fight Fast: Much of a typical Eberron adventure can be about getting to the dungeon rather than wandering through it. By "getting to the dungeon," we don't mean fighting lots of random encounters while on the road. The dungeon may be known only as a rumor and its location hidden so that the heroes must investigate to find it. That investigation can include library research, locating and then interviewing sages or Last War veterans, bribing wizards and bureaucrats, unraveling puzzles, retrieving maps or keys, and then combing the likely location to find the actual entrance. The dungeon itself is the culmination of the search, the final scene in a series of escalating episodes. When characters get there, the serious action should start quickly and reach a climax quickly. Because the entire dungeon is the climax of what may have been a long and arduous search, dungeons in Eberron are often small enough that the final mission can be resolved in one foray rather than a drawn-out series of incursions and retreats.

Excitement and Danger: Heroes of Eberron get involved in adventures because they're the only people who

can do the job. Spending half the game fighting rats in a sewer isn't heroic, even for a 1st-level party. Rat control is a job for the city guard. To reflect the heroic nature of Eberron characters and highlight the deadliness of a small dungeon, focus on a smaller number of tough challenges instead of many weak challenges. For example, instead of staging four EL 1 encounters with eight CR 1/8 rats, try two EL 2 encounters with five CR 1/3 dire rats followed by a final battle with their CR 3 wererat master. That's more dangerous, more exciting, more to the point, and more memorable.

Things Are Rarely As They Seem: Just because you meet an NPC in a dungeon doesn't make that character evil. A corrupt cleric of the Sovereign Host working on an evil plot probably has non-corrupt (and non-evil) clerics and adepts working for him under the full authority of the church. A wealthy guild of thieves and assassins can employ a dragonmarked heir of House Ghallanda or House Jorasco for cooking or healing. Harming these minions because you find them working in a dungeon is no more appropriate than killing the butler you find in an evil merchant's mansion!

Stories Don't Always End Well: If the heroes emerge from a dungeon battered but carrying the item they were sent to find, only to be ambushed by a rival adventuring party that takes it for their own, it shows the PCs that other forces are at work in the world and gives them an excuse to hunt down their rivals and take back their hard-earned loot. The PCs may not be the only ones exploring a particular dungeon; in a scavenger hunt adventure, two or more groups could be working through opposite ends of a dungeon trying to get to the goal first. This adds time pressure and encourages the heroes to press on rather than rest between encounters.

Sharn: This city is worth a separate mention because it offers unique opportunities for dungeon adventure. In addition to the lava-heated Cogs underground (which offer traditional, abandoned-mine dungeons), the lowest levels of the aboveground towers are a unique place to adventure., Some of these levels have been sealed off for tower stability or as health risks; what sorts of creatures live there? They could be degenerate, inbred humanoids that don't know the Last War is over, secret cults trying to undermine the city's foundations, or the dregs of civilized folk trapped in (or drawn to) these locations. One neat thing about these "dungeons" is that if the heroes get in serious trouble, they can escape by breaking out an exterior wall (assuming the fall to the ground doesn't kill them). It's also possible to make classically pulp, heroic rescues by breaking *into* these dungeons.

A dungeon adventure in Eberron is more than just "kick down door, kill monster, take treasure." Dungeons can be homes to people as well as monsters -- people with agendas and allies. Make every fight an exciting one, and remember that the end of the dungeon isn't always the end of the adventure.

Artifact Hunt

By Sean K Reynolds

Welcome to "Eberron Under the Glass," a new column that looks at how to handle staple themes of **D&D** adventure in an Eberron campaign. Whether it's a search for a lost artifact, unearthing lore in an old tome, or dealing with a goblin uprising, Eberron campaigns do things a little differently. This series helps Eberron players and DMs get the right feel in the setting.

This first article looks at the different role lost artifacts play in an Eberron campaign.

What Do You Mean, "Artifact?"

In a typical campaign, the artifact (and its divine counterpart, the relic) is normally a very old and powerful magic item, often with undesirable side effects. When rumors of an artifact surface, adventurers assemble to locate and recover the item, sometimes for themselves and sometimes on behalf of another group such as a church, guild, or government. Adventurers who get their hands on an artifact are often tempted to keep its powers for themselves rather than handing it over, even for a price (though the associated curses may make

them regret that decision later).

In an Eberron campaign, several factors make an artifact quest different.

Artifacts May Be New: Though "new" is a relative term, the legacy of the Last War means that many powerful and valuable objects of recent manufacture were lost through battles, sabotage, monster raids, or the creation of the Mournland. Rather than being the thousand-year-old product of an ancient civilization created with methods lost to time, a lost artifact in Eberron may be only ten years old. There probably are people still alive who have seen it or even used it and who want it back or want to make sure it remains lost. The more recent the artifact, the more people know about it and the more groups can be trying to find it.

Artifacts May Be Mechanical: In a world that mixes technology and magic, an artifact may be a piece of technology or a component to a larger item. It doesn't need to be technologically advanced; a control mechanism for an old lightning rail coach is an artifact of interest for House Orien, and House Cannith and the Lord of Blades would love to acquire the head of an unfinished warforged titan. Don't be afraid to make or adapt a nonmagical source for an artifact quest.

Artifacts May Have No Adventuring Value: Many items described or hinted at in the Eberron campaign setting are incredibly valuable to certain people but not useable by adventurers. There's little temptation for the PCs to hold onto such an item, and they shouldn't need to be railroaded into turning it over to the people who do want it. The lightning rail control mechanism mentioned above is useless to PCs unless they plan to build their own rail coach (which would take a lot of time, research, and money, besides displeasing House Orien). A complete but unactivated warforged body has no value to PCs except as spare parts but is quite useful to someone with a secret *creation forge* or someone with the know-how to imprint a soul and consciousness on the raw form. Unless characters plan to build their own lightning rail line, a cache of salvaged *conductor stones* does the PCs no good -- plus they're hard to carry around because of their tendency to repel each other.

This is not to say that an artifact quest in an Eberron campaign should always be about items with no value for the PCs. Tempting characters with more power than they can handle can lead to exciting, if tragic, adventures. Using "adventurer-valueless" items, however, allows low-level characters to quest after an interesting item without it disrupting the power level of the campaign should the PCs decide to keep it.

Everyone is Suspect: Because Eberron's divine spellcasters aren't limited by the "one step" rule for alignment, it's entirely possible that an evil member of a good church is the person responsible for sending the PCs after the artifact. In a standard campaign it's normal to assume that a cleric in high standing with a good church has good intentions -- after all, they have to be good if they're a cleric of a good deity. In Eberron, a corrupt cleric of Dol Arrah might desire a psionic artifact to dominate and control an entire city, eliminating crime and dissent at the cost of free will (not entirely unreasonable to a corrupt mindset, as Dol Arrah is the goddess of self-sacrifice, and making sacrifices for the greater good certainly falls within that realm). The cleric may explain that the item uses psionics to locate criminals and prevent hostility, neglecting to mention that it does so by reading and controlling minds. Just because a quest comes from "good" patrons doesn't guarantee they have good motivations or that success will have good consequences.

An artifact in Eberron isn't necessarily a dust-covered antique pried from the hand of a withered skeleton on a throne in a cavern miles under the earth. Artifacts can be buried under a snowfall from last winter. They can be mundane as well as magical. They don't need to be something an adventurer could use to destroy an army. They don't need to be in the hands of an evil cult to cause evil in the world. When building an artifact quest (or a scavenger hunt, as the *Eberron Campaign Setting* calls it), examine your preconceptions about artifacts and consider how you can introduce an interesting twist. If you're a player in an Eberron campaign, don't let preconceived notions about what an artifact should be blind you to the possibility that it and the people who want it could be entirely unexpected.